

Reginald DeKoven House
104 East Bellevue Place
Chicago
Cook County
Illinois

HABS No. ILL-1042

HABS
ILL,
16-CHIG,
44-

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA
Reduced Copies of Measured Drawings

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation
801 - 19th Street N.W.
Washington, D.C.

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

HABS No. ILL-1042

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Location: 104 East Bellevue Place, Chicago, Cook County, Illinois.

Present Owner: Josephine B. Willis, 100 East Bellevue Place, Chicago, Illinois.

Present Use: Small apartments.

Statement of Significance: The building is a typical example of the townhouses built in the Gold Coast section of Chicago during the 1880's. It was designed by Burnham and Root for Reginald DeKoven, an American composer.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Original and subsequent owners: Legal description of the property: Lot 21 of Block 1 in Potter Palmer's Lake Shore Drive Addition to Chicago of Canal Trustees Subdivision of south fractional section 3-39-14, recorded May 2, 1848.

The following is an abstract of the chain of title contained in Book 421, pp. 244-246, in the Cook County Recorder's Office:

On April 21, 1884, Potter Palmer sold lot 21 to Ellen Stanley (Document 540344), who entered into a party wall agreement with Mary Scudder, owner of the lot 22, on November 21, 1884 (Document 589176). On March 9, 1889, Reginald DeKoven purchased the property from the Stanleys (Document 1205524). The DeKovens retained the property until April 26, 1906, when it was taken over by William H. Schriver (Document 3863906). Since March 1, 1924, when Schriver entered into a series of agreements with William B. Blake (Document 9084495) and others, the ownership of the property has had a complex history. It appears, however, that Cora E. Howland and husband were the principal owners (Documents 9302416, 9547070, 10580163, 12654059) until June 30, 1943 when Nathaniel Willis became the owner of lots 20-22. On June 29, 1954, Josephine B. Willis became the owner of the property.

2. Date of erection: 1889.

3. Architect: Burnham and Root (John Wellborn Root probably largely responsible for the design).
4. Original plans, construction, etc.: From the original permit 911, dated April 5, 1889, in Book F, October 1888 - July 1891, p. 40, Department of Buildings, Chicago: P. E. Stanley received a permit to build a 4-story dwelling, 21' front, 64' deep, 52' high on lot 21, then 65 Bellevue Place; cost of permit being \$6.90.

Below are three early descriptions of the house:

- a. "Residence for R. DeKoven, Burnham and Root, Architect," Inland Architect, Vol. 13 (April, 1889), p. 61:

"For R. DeKoven, residence, in the Elizabethan style of architecture, with a wide, flat bay carried through the second and third stories. The top story will be surrounded by a tall timber and brick gable. The interior will be quite unusual in arrangement, and will be finished throughout in hardwoods. It will be four stories high, with a frontage of 25 feet and 70 feet deep."

- b. Harriet Monroe, John Wellborn Root (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin & Company, 1896), p. 156:

"Another beautiful narrow facade, erected at 65 Bellevue Place for Mr. Reginald DeKoven, is a charming example of strictly urban architecture, and the interior plan is equally inviting. The material is reddish-brown brick, rough-faced in the first story, smooth above. Large copper bays at the second and third stories lead to a steep gable at the fourth, projecting from a sloping roof. This design, which has something of Flemish Gothic feeling, is graceful in proportions and rich in color."

- c. Anna (Farwell) DeKoven, A Musician and His Wife (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1926), p. 132:

"The long journey back to America was accomplished with as little delay as possible. My husband, on returning to Chicago, continued for one winter more to fill his secretarial post with my father's Texas company. For that winter only we occupied our own house in Chicago. With the preference I have always had for sixteenth-century English architecture, it was built with some originality on a twenty-five foot lot, with the entrance floor designed as a high ceilinged hall, with a deep fireplace, and an imitation tapestry. This was all we

could afford in those days. The window on the street had diamond-paned heraldic glass, and in the paneled dining room with steps leading up from the hall, portraits were set, and the wall with the door opening on the landing was also glazed and illuminated. On the second floor was a library, also paneled, and a blue-and-pink French drawing room. Here, to this house at 25 Bellevue Place, we began to invite the various actors, actresses, who played in Chicago, such as the Kendals, Wilson Barrett, and Francis Wilson."

5. Alterations and additions: The original DeKoven house has been altered extensively on the interior to facilitate its subdivision into small apartments. A kitchen and garage were added to the rear of the house at the first floor level. This work was probably carried out in 1943 (Building Permit 135544, September 7, 1943). In 1959 a door and additions to the fire escape were installed (Building Permit B268734, September 18, 1959).

B. Historical Events and Persons Connected with the Structure:

The house served for a short time as the Chicago home of Reginald DeKoven and his wife Anna Farwell DeKoven: it was completed in 1889 and they lived there until 1892 Chicago Blue Book of Selected Names, 27 v. (Chicago Directory Co., 1890-1915), v. 1891, 1892/. Below are bibliographical sketches of the DeKovens:

1. From "Reginald DeKoven Obituary," Chicago Tribune, January 17, 1920, p. 13:

"Reginald DeKoven was born April 3, 1861 in Middletown, Connecticut. Graduating from Oxford at 19, he went on to study music at Racine College, also spending two years in Europe - Stuttgart, Florence, Paris, Vienna. DeKoven founded the Washington Symphony Orchestra and was its first conductor. At the time of his death in 1920, he had been living in New York at 1025 Park Avenue and had only just come to Chicago to conduct rehearsals for his opera Rip Van Winkle. Concerning the opera, he had remarked just before his death: 'My ambition is to continue working for the Americanization of grand opera in this country, and to prove to America that music does exist in her composers' souls. I plan to compose another American opera shortly.'"

2. Below is a list of DeKoven's musical compositions based on the catalogue listings in the Newberry Library in Chicago. Unless otherwise indicated, the works are operas and comic-operas with librettos by Harry B. Smith:

- 1883 "Sea Story," ballade with words by Walter Satterlee
1887 The Begum
1890 Don Quixote
1893 The Fencing Master
1894 Rob Roy
1896 The Mandarin
1898 The Highwayman
1899 The Three Dragoons
1900 The Idle Born, a comedy of manners by Hobart Chatfield-Taylor in collaboration with Reginald DeKoven.
1901 Maid Marian
1903 Red Feather, book by Charles Klein, lyrics by Chas. Emerson Cook.
1905 Happyland or The King of Elysia, book by Frederick Ranken.
1906 The Student King
1916 The Canterbury Pilgrims
1919 Robin Hood
1919 Rip Van Winkle, text by Percy McKay.
Other songs: "Oh Promise Me," "A Recessional."

3. "DeKoven, Mrs. Anna Farwell, Obituary," Chicago Tribune, January 13, 1953, p. 4:

"Mrs. Anna Farwell DeKoven, 92, author and widow of composer Reginald DeKoven, died yesterday in Northeast Harbor, Me. She was a native of Chicago and lived here and in Lake Forest, but after her marriage to the composer in 1884 she spent much of her life in New York and Italy.

"Mrs. DeKoven was the author of the Life and Letters of John Paul Jones, The Counts of Gruyere, A Musician and His Wife, Horace Walpole and Mme. duDeffand, and A Cloud of Witnesses. She was the daughter of United States Senator Charles B. Farwell, who served as a congressman and senator from Illinois for 30 years before his death in 1903. Her husband, who died in 1920, was the composer of several operas including Rip Van Winkle and Robin Hood. Mrs. DeKoven became interested in spiritualism after her husband's death and made many attempts to communicate with him. Her book A Cloud of Witnesses, described messages she said she received through a medium from her sister, the late Mrs. Hobart Chatfield Taylor."

C. Bibliography:

DeKoven, Anna (Farwell). A Musician and His Wife. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1926. p. 132.

An autobiographical account with a description of the DeKoven home in Chicago.

"DeKoven, Mrs. Anna Farwell, Obituary," Chicago Tribune,
January 13, 1953. p. 4.

"DeKoven, Reginald, Obituary," Chicago Tribune, January 17,
1920. p. 13.

Monroe, Harriet. John Wellborn Root. Boston: Houghton,
Mifflin & Company, 1896. p. 156, description of house.
Engravings of DeKoven House: Facade p. 115, hall p. 121,
fireplace p. 127.

"Residence for R. DeKoven; Burnham & Root, architects,"
Inland Architect, Vol. 13 (April, 1889). p. 61.

D. Supplementary Sources:

1. Material on the DeKovens:

Clark, Herma. The Elegant Eighties. p. 113.
Article on DeKoven wedding.

DeKoven, Anna (Farwell). A Sawdust Doll. Chicago: Stone
and Kimball, 1895.
Another novel by Mrs. DeKoven.

DeKoven, Anna (Farwell). "The new woman and golf playing,"
Cosmopolitan, V. XXI, No. 4 (1896). pp. 352-361.
First article published in the United States on
golf for women.

Kirkland. Chicago Yesterdays. p. 243.

Moses and Kirkland. History of Chicago. p. 584.
Article on Mrs. DeKoven.

Shackelton. Book of Chicago. p. 222.

Who's Who in America, Vol. 1. p. 311.

2. "John Wellborn Root" (magazine references compiled by
Burnham Library, February 1934):

Inland Architect, V. 16 (January 1891). Contains the
following:

Editor's notes:

Death of architect John Wellborn Root. p. 83.
In regard to Mr. Root's public offices. pp. 83-84.

Henry Van Brunt, John Wellborn Root. pp. 85-88.

Peter B. Wight:

John W. Root, as a draftsman. p. 88.
Circumstances attending the death of John W. Root.
pp. 88-89. (Including his signature.)

Funeral services of John W. Root. p. 90.
(Resolutions passed by various organizations.)
Buildings designed by John W. Root. p. 91.

"Architects of Chicago." The last article for public
print written by Mr. Root was a contribution about
the architects of Chicago for AMERICA, a Chicago
literary and political weekly and published anonymously
in a "Special holiday number" - credited to "a
prominent architect." Reprinted here, pp. 91-92.

Inland Architect, V. 15 (June 1890):

Root, John Wellborn, "A great architectural problem."
pp. 67-71.

Inland Architect, V. 8 (January 1887):

Root, John Wellborn, "Style." pp. 99-101.

A paper read before the Chicago Architectural Sketch
Club, January 3, 1887. Revised by the author for the
Inland Architect.

Architecture and Building, V. 44 (November 1912):

Starrett, Theodore, "John Wellborn Root." pp. 429-431.

Inland Architect, V. 16 (September 1890):

Article entitled: "Columbian Exposition Architects and
Engineers." Has brief biographical sketch of Burnham,
Root, Olmstead, Codman & Gottlieb. pp. 19-20.

Inland Architect, V. 11 (February 1888):

Root, John Wellborn, "Broad art criticism." pp. 3-5.

A paper read before the Chicago Architectural Sketch
Club, January 16, 1888. Revised by the author for
Inland Architect.

Inland Architect, V. 8 (December 1886):

Root, John Wellborn, "Architectural Freedom." pp. 64-65.

Read at a dinner of architects at Union League Club
House, Chicago, November 18, 1886.

Prepared by J. William Rudd
Supervisory Architect
and
Larry J. Homolka
Historian
National Park Service
July 1964

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: The house is a typical late 1880's Chicago townhouse designed by Burnham and Root for a well-known composer and music critic.
2. Condition of fabric: The brick and stone work on the exterior is generally good except for steps and railing where the red sandstone is spalling badly. The interiors are extensively altered. A fire escape now covers the east third of the south front.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: Originally 24'-4" by 71'-0", modified rectangle, three-and-one-half stories above a raised basement.
2. Foundations: Stone masonry plastered over in the basement.
3. Wall construction, finish and color: The walls of the raised basement are stone. There is red sandstone trim around the openings and a heavy stone lintel which runs across the front of the house at the top of the first floor windows. Brick at the first floor level is very deep red with heavily textured face. Above this level, the walls are red, smooth-faced, common brick. There is a projecting two-story bay on the south (front) wall of the house which contains the second and third floor windows. Stamped metal panels decorate the top, middle and bottom of the bay. There is an applique of metal strips simulating "half-timbering" on the high pitched gable which tops the front facade. Rear walls are made of inexpensive backing brick of a deep brown color.
4. Porches: Large red sandstone steps and railing run from the public sidewalk to the main entrance stoop at the first floor level. Sandstone steps lead down to basement entrance under the main entrance stoop.
5. Chimneys: The brick chimney on east wall towards front of the house has four flues. The brick chimney on north wall has four flues.
6. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: The main entrance door is on the east side of the south facade. It is recessed in a sandstone surround with Tudor arch opening. The main entrance door is oak with a single glazed panel above

a single wooden panel. Other exterior doors are not original. Original openings at the rear of the house no longer exist.

- b. Windows: On the front facade, there are two windows at the basement level, set deeply in the stone and covered with metal grills. At the first floor level are four tall windows with Tudor-arched tops. They are treated as a unit and set behind the face of the wall. These windows have fixed upper sash and vertically operating lower sash. Each fixed sash contains a different coat of arms design in leaded glass. The remainder of the fixed sash and the entire lower sash is decorated with intersecting diagonal lines which form diamond-shaped patterns. The second and third floor windows are located in the two-story projecting bay. There are five windows on each floor, three on the front face of the bay and one on each side. Each of these windows has an in-swinging casement sash below a fixed sash. There is a group of three similar windows in the gable. Windows in the dining room bay have in-swinging casement sash. Rear windows are double hung.

7. Roof:

- a. Shape, covering: There is a false gable on the south facade which abuts a steeply pitched roof surface that appears from the front to be one face of a cross gable. Behind this is a flat roof at the same height as the ridge line of the front slope. The gable and pitched roof are covered with asphalt shingles; the flat roof, with built up roofing.
- b. Cornice, eaves: There is a horizontal sheet metal cornice above the third floor. The sheet metal raking cornice of the gable terminates above the bottom of the gable. The many coats of paint on the metal work makes identification of the material difficult. The down-spout appears to be copper.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans:

- a. Basement: The basement originally contained a kitchen in the north (rear) end and a servants' sitting room in the south end.

- b. First floor: The central portion of the house on the four upper floors is occupied by the open stairwell. To the south of this on the first floor is a reception room with a small entrance vestibule and a fireplace nook. To the north, up six steps, is the dining room.
 - c. Second floor: There was originally a drawing room on the south and another large room to the north.
 - d. Third floor: Bedrooms and baths for family and guests were located on this floor.
 - e. Fourth floor: There was a ballroom to the south and servants' bedrooms to the north.
2. Stairways: The large main stairhall is located in the center of the house. It carries the full height of four floors and has a skylight above. Risers are located on the north, east and south walls of the stairwell with a hallway open to the stairwell located on the west side. A small stairway for servants is located just north of the main stair on east wall of the house and carries from the basement to the third floor.
 3. Flooring: Most of the rooms had hardwood flooring with tile hearths. There is a brick hearth in the reception room nook. Vestibule flooring is mosaic tile. Many floors have been changed to tile with hardboard underfloor.
 4. Wall and ceiling finish: On the first floor plaster walls are trimmed with oak wainscoting. The living room has a wooden beam and exposed plank ceiling. On the upper three floors, walls and ceilings are of painted plaster.
 5. Doorways and doors: Many of the original doors remain in the house. On the first floor, doors and trim were of dark oak. On the upper floors, most were of white oak.
 6. Decorative features and trim: There is a bottle glass panel above the built-in seat on the south side of the reception hall fireplace nook. The panel "borrows" light from the entrance vestibule. An elaborate built-in buffet still exists on the west wall of the dining room. Between the stairhall and dining room there was originally a partition made up of dark oak panels and a series of bottle glass panels which rose from the floor to door head height. One dark oak panel still remains.
 7. Heating: The rooms at the north and south ends of the house on the four main floors have fireplaces. There are also some radiators.

D. Site and Surroundings:

1. General setting and orientation: The house faces south on Bellevue Place and is about one block west of Lake Shore Drive in what was once the fashionable Gold Coast section of Chicago. Bellevue Place is lined on both sides with similar old townhouses. To the east of the house there are some modern high rise units.

The house is presently a tenant property, as are the other townhouses at 100, 102 and 106 East Bellevue. All are under a single management.

2. Landscaping and walks, enclosures: The house sits back 23 feet from the sidewalk and has a small area of grass in the southeast corner of the property.

Prepared by J. William Rudd
Supervisory Architect
National Park Service
July 1964

PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

The records of this structure were made during the 1964 Chicago II Project. This was the second in a series of summer projects designed to record the significant architecture of the Chicago area. The project was sponsored by Mr. Earl A. Reed, FAIA. He was assisted by a Finance committee composed of John Fugard, FAIA; William E. Hartmann, FAIA; Alfred Shaw, FAIA; and a Selection committee consisting of James Arkin, AIA; Ruth Schoneman, Art Institute of Chicago; and J. Carson Webster, Northwestern University. Organizations cooperating with HABS in this project were the City of Chicago; the Chicago Chapter of the American Institute of Architects, its Foundation, the Garrick Salvage Fund; and the Women's Architectural League of Chicago. The City of Chicago provided office space, and the Illinois Institute of Technology furnished living quarters.

Mr. James C. Massey, HABS Supervisory Architect, was in over-all charge of HABS summer programs. Professor J. William Rudd, then of Texas Technological College, served as Chicago II Project Supervisor. Other members of the summer team were historian, Larry Homolka, Harvard University; photographer, Harold Allen; secretary, Mrs. Bert P. Schloss; and student architects, Joseph Hayman, University of Pennsylvania; Robert Felin, University of Pennsylvania; Robert Saxon, Pennsylvania State University; Rex Poggenpohl, Illinois Institute of Technology; and Janis Erins, Illinois Institute of Technology.